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A SCRIPTURAL VIEW
OF THE
MORAL RELATIONS
OF
AFRICAN SLAVERY.

BY
DAVID EWART,
OF COLUMBIA, S. C.

1849.

REVISED AND AMENDED IN 1859.

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If the relation of slavery, as it now exists in the Southern States, is susceptible of defence by the word of God, the relation must be a moral relation. If it is not, it ought to be abandoned. It is to the law and to the testimony we must appeal for the defence and government of every relation in life. If we do not speak and act agreeably thereto, it is because there is no truth in us.

I will, with all due diligence, and with humble dependence on Divine aid, search the Scriptures with a view to learn what they say and teach, as to this much-litigated question.

Whether the antediluvians owned slaves or not, we are left to conjecture. We may be permitted to infer that they did. In proof of which the following considerations may be urged, *i. e.* : they lived to a great age, cultivated the arts and sciences extensively, consequently, required much servile labor for the profitable investment of the great wealth which some of them must have gathered during so long a lifetime. It may have been that they enslaved the out-east sons of Cain. Noah was, no doubt, a man of great wealth, and of great literary and mechanical knowledge, otherwise he would have been incom-

petent to the task of building so large a sea vessel as he constructed, agreeably to a plan and specifications submitted to him by the great Architect of the universe. This ark required upwards of one hundred years to complete it. It is probable that the labor was performed by Noah and his bondmen; without such aid it is scarcely probable that he could have borne such a heavy outlay by the aid of hirelings alone.

The above conjectural remarks bring us down the stream of time to the history of the postdiluvians, where we are not left, as to this question, to grope our way through the intricate mazes of doubt or uncertainty.

A short time after the flood, Noah planted a vineyard, and drank too freely of the wine which he had made. Whilst under its influence, he unconsciously exposed his person in his tent. Owing to some indelicacy and improper levity on the part of his second son, Ham, at the time, which was brought to the ears of his father after he awoke, the following prophetic curse was pronounced by his father upon his posterity—see Gens., chap. 9th, verses 24, 25, 26 and 27—where the descendants of Ham are given to the descendants of his two brothers in perpetual servitude to this day. The fact, that what was said by Noah of the descendants of Ham, has actually come to pass, is proof positive that he did not speak of himself, but by the spirit of prophecy.

God is a sovereign; as such he is the sole possessor and disposer of everything which he has made; hence, his undoubted right to dispose of Ham's posterity as he has done. The inference is conclusive, that those who hold property in the descendants of Ham, hold it by Divine right.

It is passing strange that any one would be so bold as to dispute such a title as this.

In pursuance of this right, we find, by turning to the 12th chapter of Genesis, from the 1st to the 5th verses, inclusive, that Abram (a lineal descendant of Shem) was called by God to leave his native country, Caldea, with a view to a future settlement in the land of Canaan. He obeyed, and brought with him Sarai, his wife, Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran.

The subsequent history of Abram and Lot prove that most of these souls were bondmen or slaves.

In the 16th chapter of Genesis and 3d verse, we are informed, that Sarai gave her maid, Hagar, the Egyptian, to Abram to be his wife, who was a descendant of Ham; no doubt, purchased with his money whilst he sojourned in the land of Egypt.

By reading a few verses more in the same chapter, we learn that a family misunderstanding took place between Sarai and her servant Hagar. Sarai dealt hardly with her, so that she ran away from the presence of her enraged mistress; she betook herself to the wilderness, near where there was water, where the Angel of the Lord found her, who counseled her as follows: "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her, return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." It seems that the example of the Messenger of God, in this case, is lost upon some of our countrymen.

In the 17th chapter, 11th, 12th and 13th verses, Abram is commanded by God: "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you; and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you; every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money from any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Thus we see that, although they were slaves, yet they were included in the Abrahamic covenant. Nor are they excluded from the covenant of grace, as will more fully appear hereafter.

Abram had a great many servants. It is recorded, that at the battle of the confederated kings, he mustered three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in his house, who pursued the kings, retook Lot, his brother's son, all his substance, and all his household, and brought them back.

The Fourth Commandment, universally binding upon all people, enjoins, that no work shall be done on the Sabbath day, viz.: "Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates, &c., &c." That servants means bondmen, and that strangers means hirelings and sojourners, do not admit of a doubt.

See Exodus, chap. 12th, from the 43d to the 49th verses, inclusive:

"And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron: this is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof.

"But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou has circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

"A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.

"In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

"All the children of Israel shall keep it.

"And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."

"One law shall be to him that is home born and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."—Exodus, chap. 21, v. 20.

"If a man smite his man or maid servants with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished: notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his money."

Verse 32d—"If the ox push a man-servant or a maid-servant, so that he die, the owner shall give to his master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned."

The laws of God were written upon two tables of stone to denote their perpetuity. The first table teaches us our duty to God, and the second table teaches us our duty to man, and are universally binding on all mankind; and were published with a distinct view, on the part of the Divine Lawgiver, to meet cases which have, and will occur, so long as sun and moon endure. No time can possibly occur when it can be said, that any clause in this everlasting statute book of Jehovah will become a dead letter.

It is recorded that the Gibeonites were doomed to slavery to the house of Israel.

God ordained that the descendants of Ham should be servants to the descendants of his two brothers, and subsequently published a code of laws for the government of that relation.

Would an infinitely pure and holy God compose and publish a code of laws for the government of a relation necessarily wrong? Such an idea would be very wrong indeed. But God has published a code of laws for the government of this relation; *ergo*, it must be a moral relation.

See 1st book of Kings, chap. 2, verses 39 and 40—"And it came to pass, at the end of three years, that two of the servants

of Shimei ran away unto Achish; son of Maachah, King of Gath; and they told Shimei, saying: Behold, they be in Gath."

"And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath, to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath."

From which it seems that there were no Abolitionists in those days.

Job was a slave-holder: refer to chap. 31st, verses 13th, 14th and 15th—"If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or my maid-servant, when he contended with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?"

Proverbs, 12th chap., v. 9th—"He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he who honoreth himself and lacketh bread."

See Isaiah, chap. 14th, and 2d verse—"And the people (Israelites) shall take them and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them, in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors."

This is slavery, and sanctioned by God himself.

Having searched the Old Testament Scriptures, we give our attention to the New Testament.

During the ministry of Christ and his Apostles, neither of them uttered one sentence against the institution of slavery, or against the constituted authorities of the states over which they traveled; but, on the contrary, urged obedience to law, order, and the powers that be, at the peril of their souls.

Christ declared, throughout the whole length of his ministry, that his kingdom was not of this world. He came to set up a spiritual kingdom, disunited from worldly power or worldly glory; left a code of moral laws for the government of all the ordinary relations of life then existing, or that should thereafter exist, including master and slave.

Indeed, the great object of Christ's mission on earth was to improve the faculties of the whole man, to amend the heart, social relations, &c. Man can't surpass his moral sense, just in proportion as this faculty is improved, elevated and expanded.

Just in the same degree will his actions be improved, elevated and expanded. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good also.

We have been forcibly struck with the great difference between the teachings and personal examples of the Bible, and the teachings and examples of Abolitionists. The Scriptures teach servants to obey. Abolitionists teach servants to disobey. The Bible teaches servants to abide with their masters, even with bad masters; Abolitionists entice them to run away, and send them to a land of strangers afterwards. If the teachings and actings of the Abolitionists be true, the Bible is not true; because they are antagonistic.

We will now allude to the parable of the prodigal son, as it is recorded in Luke's Gospel, chap. 15th. This parable sets forth the relation which exists between master, servant and hireling.

"A certain man had two sons; the younger of them said to his father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. His father consented. A few days afterwards took his departure to a strange country, where he squandered his property upon very unworthy objects. Soon after this, a famine made its frightful appearance in the land. To obtain bread, he engaged himself to feed swine; of their allowance he desired to eat, but was not permitted. At this point he began to fully realize his sad and lowered condition, as compared with the pleasing recollection of the abundance to be had in his father's house. Hope, the anchor of his soul, sprang into fruition. He thus exclaims: 'How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.' Such was the deep humility of this young man, that he did not ask his father to make him as one of his bondmen; for that would have placed him but one degree below his father: but to be as an hireling, the third degree from his father. An hireling, between whom there is but little sympathy, because he is an hireling, and careth not for his employer; nor does his employer care for him."

The presumption is, that the father, alluded to in this parable, owned slaves; because he is represented to be a man who had

property to spare. All, or nearly all such, owned slaves in the then Roman empire.

Let us hear what St. Paul says about this matter. I doubt very much whether the teachings of the Apostle will have any better effect upon the Abolitionists, than his admirable address had upon King Agrippa.—Almost persuade them. Postpone its consideration to a more convenient season.

Refer to Paul to the Ephesians: chap. 6th, v. 5th, &c.—“Servants, be obedient to them who are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master is also in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”

It was not until about the commencement of the present century, that it entered into the imagination of any one that slavery was either a physical or moral evil. Since then, individuals who were supposed to be laboring under partial hallucination, undertook to be wise above what is written, commenced a crusade against slavery, gained proselytes, and continue to gain them. No absurdity, however vain or fanciful, if pressed upon hearers with zeal and perseverance, but will gain proselytes.

We have reached an age when children suppose themselves wiser than their fathers were. In matters relating to money-making, this is true; but as to a knowledge of the book of God, it is far from being true.

Many very sensible men are astonished at the strange views and opinions set forth by the Abolitionists. This astonishment vanishes before the light of prophecy. St. Paul did see, through the medium of prophecy, that, in the latter days, there would arise such people as the Abolitionists, also the very doctrine which they are now teaching. In proof of which, turn to the 6th chap. of Paul to Timothy: “Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit." These things teach and exhort.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Less than the inspiration of God could not have drawn a plainer picture of the acts, sentiments and opinions of the present Abolitionists.

Gal., 3d chap., 27th and 28th verses—"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Then refer to the epistle of Paul to Philemon. Philemon was a fellow-laborer in the Gospel with Paul, of course a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ; notwithstanding, he owned one slave, if no more, who ran away from him and made his way to Rome, where Paul found him, took him under his care, taught him Christianity, to which he became a convert, and subsequently became the bearer of this epistle to his master. In which Paul writes: "For, perhaps, he therefore departed, but for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If thou count me, therefore, a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or owe thee aught, put that on mine account."

The next testimony I shall call in will be St. Peter, by whom I hope to prove that he is no Abolitionist. The first of Peter, 2d chap., from the 18th to the 21st verses inclusive: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

"For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults,

ye shall take it patiently. But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

"For even hereunto were ye called ; because that Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again : when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

The last testimony which I will introduce will be the beloved St. John.

Chap. 18th, and part of the 13th verse—"And horses, and chariots, and *slaves*, and souls of men."

In this chapter the inspired apostle sets forth the awful downfall of an immense city which he denominates Babylon, or confusion ; portrays, in melancholy strains, the lamentations of merchants, in consequence of the loss of their commerce. An enumeration is made of the articles of trade—one of them, slaves. That this dreadful catastrophe has not yet taken place, is evident from the tenor of the chapter from which I have quoted. Whether it will take place this year, or at any future day, I have nothing to say in this connection. One fact I have to do with, and that is, when the time will come there will be traffic in slaves.

I will now claim the attention of the reader to what shall take place, as to this question, at the end of the world. There I am compelled to stop.

Please refer to the same book, 6th chap. and 15th verse—"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, *and every bondman, and every freeman*, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the rocks and the mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?"

I have searched the holy Scriptures diligently, in view of this question, and particularly with a view to discover what the truth is with regard to this much-litigated question. I freely admit that I have satisfactorily convinced myself, as to the fact that slavery is, in deed and in truth, a moral relation, and humbly confess that I did not always think so ; but searching

the Scriptures brought me to a very different conclusion. Any honest man who will prayerfully read the quotations which I have carefully collated and placed on the foregoing pages, will, and must come to the same conclusion that I have—that African slavery is a Divine institution.

It appears, from the last quotation which I have made, that there will be “bondmen” on the earth when the last trumpet sounds. This admitted, the hope of liberating all the slaves upon the whole earth must be visionary indeed.

DAVID EWART.



